

**BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT  
STAFF REPORT****Date: April 6, 2015**

<b><u>CASE NUMBER</u></b>	5957
<b><u>APPLICANT NAME</u></b>	Wrico Signs, Inc.
<b><u>LOCATION</u></b>	470 Schillinger Road South (West side of Schillinger Road South, 675' ± South of Airport Boulevard)
<b><u>VARIANCE REQUEST</u></b>	<b>SIGN:</b> Sign Variance to allow three wall advertising signs, and one informational/ directional sign with 35 square feet, for one tenant at a multi-tenant site in a B-3 Community Business District.
<b><u>ZONING ORDINANCE REQUIREMENT</u></b>	<b>SIGN:</b> The Zoning Ordinance allows one wall advertising sign, and informational/ directional signs of no more than 20 square feet, on a multi-tenant site in a B-3, Community Business District.
<b><u>ZONING</u></b>	B-3, Community Business District
<b><u>AREA OF PROPERTY</u></b>	0.57 ± Acres
<b><u>ENGINEERING COMMENTS</u></b>	No comments
<b><u>TRAFFIC ENGINEERING COMMENTS</u></b>	This variance request was not reviewed by Traffic Engineering
<b><u>CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT</u></b>	District 6
<b><u>ANALYSIS</u></b>	The applicant is requesting a Sign Variance to allow three wall advertising signs, and one informational/ directional sign with 35 square feet, for one tenant at a multi-tenant site in a B-3 Community Business District; the Zoning Ordinance allows one wall advertising sign, and informational/ directional signs of no more than 20 square feet, on a multi-tenant site in a B-3, Community Business District.

The applicant currently has three non-conforming wall signs, one freestanding pylon sign, and one freestanding monument sign, all of which were present prior to the site being annexed into

the City of Mobile in 2008. Building permits have been approved and issued for this site to allow exterior and interior renovations to the existing building. Based on the information submitted with the application, the exterior layout of the front of the building will change and the existing wall signs will be replaced with the proposed signage submitted with the application; thus the reason for the sign variance.

The Zoning Ordinance states that no variance shall be granted where economics are the basis for the application; and, unless the Board is presented with sufficient evidence to find that the variance will not be contrary to the public interest, and that special conditions exist such that a literal enforcement of the Ordinance will result in an unnecessary hardship. The Ordinance also states that a variance should not be approved unless the spirit and intent of the Ordinance is observed and substantial justice done to the applicant and the surrounding neighborhood.

Variances are not intended to be granted frequently. The applicant must clearly show the Board that the request is due to very unusual characteristics of the property and that it satisfies the variance standards. What constitutes unnecessary hardship and substantial justice is a matter to be determined from the facts and circumstances of each application.

The applicant states the following reason(s) to explain the need for the variance:

*“Over the past several years, Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc. (Toyota) has been transitioning to a revised national branding strategy. Exterior signs on the dealer facilities have played an important part in the strategy. As you may know, Scion is a brand within the Toyota family and is considered a separate car line for our dealer body. Scion's exposure is limited throughout the U.S. Their marketing budget is much smaller and size of the Scion dealer body is a fraction of the Toyota dealer body. Therefore, it is vital for us to provide exposure to the Scion brand within their context. The Scion retail outlets have a very basic sign strategy that's simple compared to other automotive franchises.*

*We are requesting a variance from the City of Mobile to allow the Scion letters to be installed on the main elevation at Palmer's Airport Toyota. These letters are 18 inches tall and are the standard set of letters provided for any of our Scion facility models. The letters are LED illuminated, which, as you know, is a technology, that uses half the energy of neon or florescent illuminated letters. The LED letters are also friendlier to the environment because they are not changed out on a frequent basis (they're made to last over 100,000 hours) and most importantly, unlike neon or florescent letters, they do not contain mercury.*

*We are also requesting a variance from the City of Mobile to allow the dealership to install letters stating SERVICE RECEPTION. These letters are illuminated with white LED as well. Toyota does take pride in responding to our customer's needs. Previous to Toyota launching their new retail facility initiative, we met with many customer focus groups. The consensus number one concern of these focus groups was where to enter a building. We decided to use SERVICE RECEPTION as our identifier to leave no doubt to our customers that they are welcome for service at this location. This may seem to a city*

*as a minor issue or concern; however not all Toyota dealerships have service at their same location as sales; particularly dealerships within city limits where land is at a premium. We are fortunate that Palmer's Airport Toyota has the opportunity to provide our customers sales as well as service."*

Due to the fact the existing non-conforming wall signs must be removed in order to complete the revised building layout, the non-conforming status of the previous signage will no longer be upheld. It seems as though the hardship of removing the existing signage to replace new signage would be a self-imposed hardship based upon the applicant's desire to redesign the layout of the existing building. However, staff is also aware that auto dealerships have stipulations within their contracts that require certain obligations of the dealership(s) and the overall site design and signage submitted is consistent with the sign package(s) submitted by other Toyota dealerships in the city of Mobile.

It should be pointed out that although this site is within a recently annexed area, the majority of the commercial properties which may have non-conforming signage in the immediate vicinity, appear to have complied with the regulations of Section 64-11.3.b. of the Zoning Ordinance regarding non-conforming signs since annexation – if the signs were being replaced or upgraded.

It should also be pointed out that two of the three wall signs that are being requested for approval depict one dealership name and one brand name of the vehicles sold at the auto dealership. Although the size and configuration of the proposed signage is not identical to the previous non-conforming signage, ultimately the applicant is requesting the overall same content with the exception of one additional brand name sign.

The current directional/ informational sign depicts the word "Service". The applicants state that they would like to replace the existing sign with the proposed sign that reads "Service Reception" to relay to customers that they are "welcome of service at this location" due to the fact not all Toyota dealerships have service at their same location as sales. The Zoning Ordinance allows directional/ information signs less than 20' without a permit; however due to the size of the request (35') a variance is required.

Staff is aware that in certain instances the Board has been sympathetic to the need for separate signs for each brand as well as separate dealerships. A letter was submitted by a representative on behalf of the Toyota dealership justifying the need to advertise the Scion brand as a separate car brand for exposure, and to keep in line with Toyota's national branding strategy. Therefore, staff is of the opinion that in keeping with the Board's previous approvals regarding signage for car dealerships the approval of this request would seem appropriate.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends to the Board the following findings of fact for Approval:

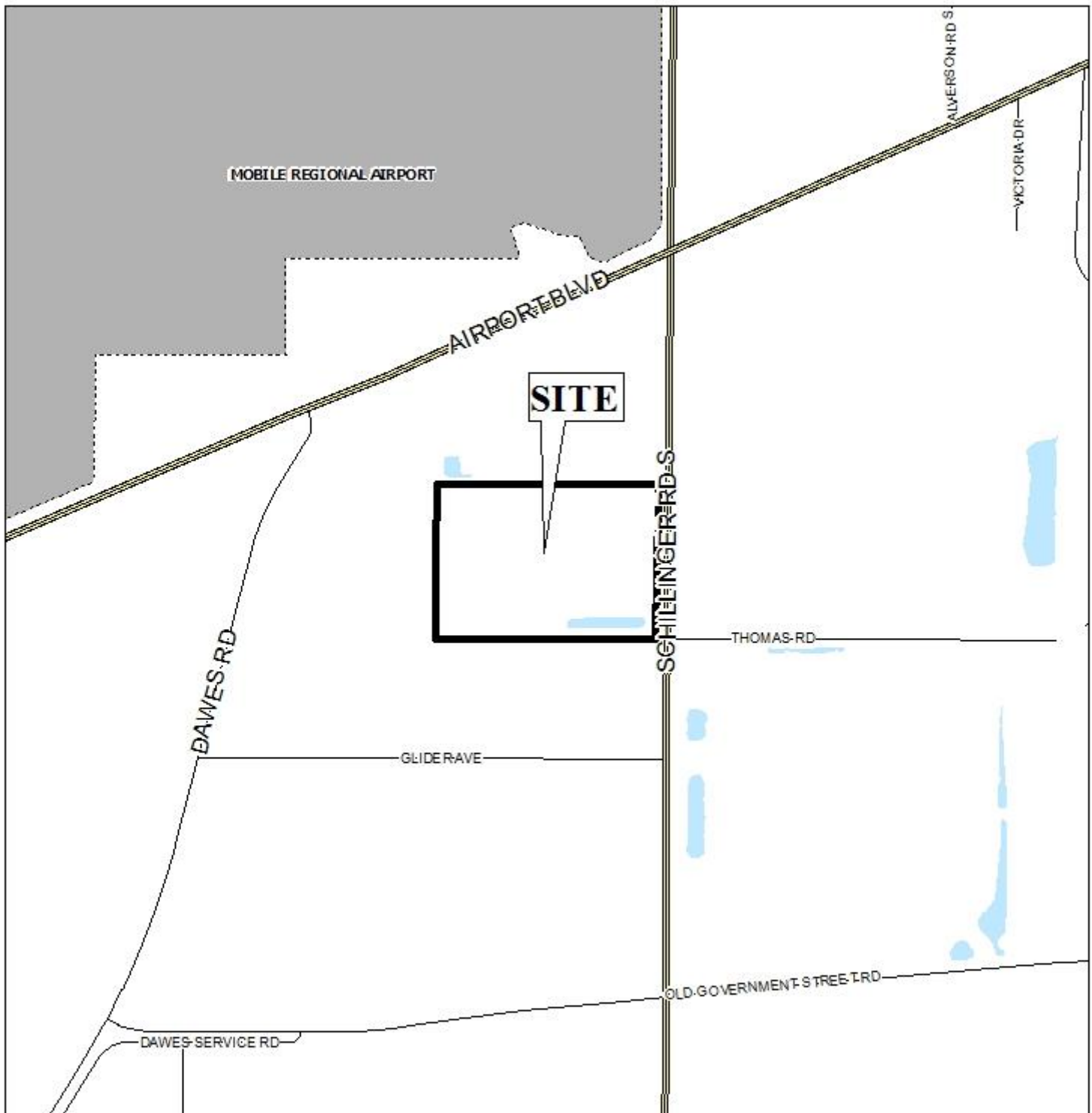
- 1) The variance will not be contrary to the public interest in that the applicant will technically be adding one new sign along with the previous signage displayed on the current building;

- 2) special conditions, such as multiple automotive brands being sold in one location and corporate contractual requirements, exist such that a literal enforcement of the provisions of the chapter will result in an unnecessary hardship; and
- 3) the spirit of the chapter shall be observed and substantial justice shall be done to the applicant and surrounding area by granting the variance as it would provide the same treatment to this auto dealer that has been provided to other auto dealers during previously approved sign variance requests.

Therefore, this application is recommended for approval, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) submission of a sign permit application;
- 2) submission of an electrical permit; and
- 3) full compliance with all other municipal codes and ordinances.

# LOCATOR MAP



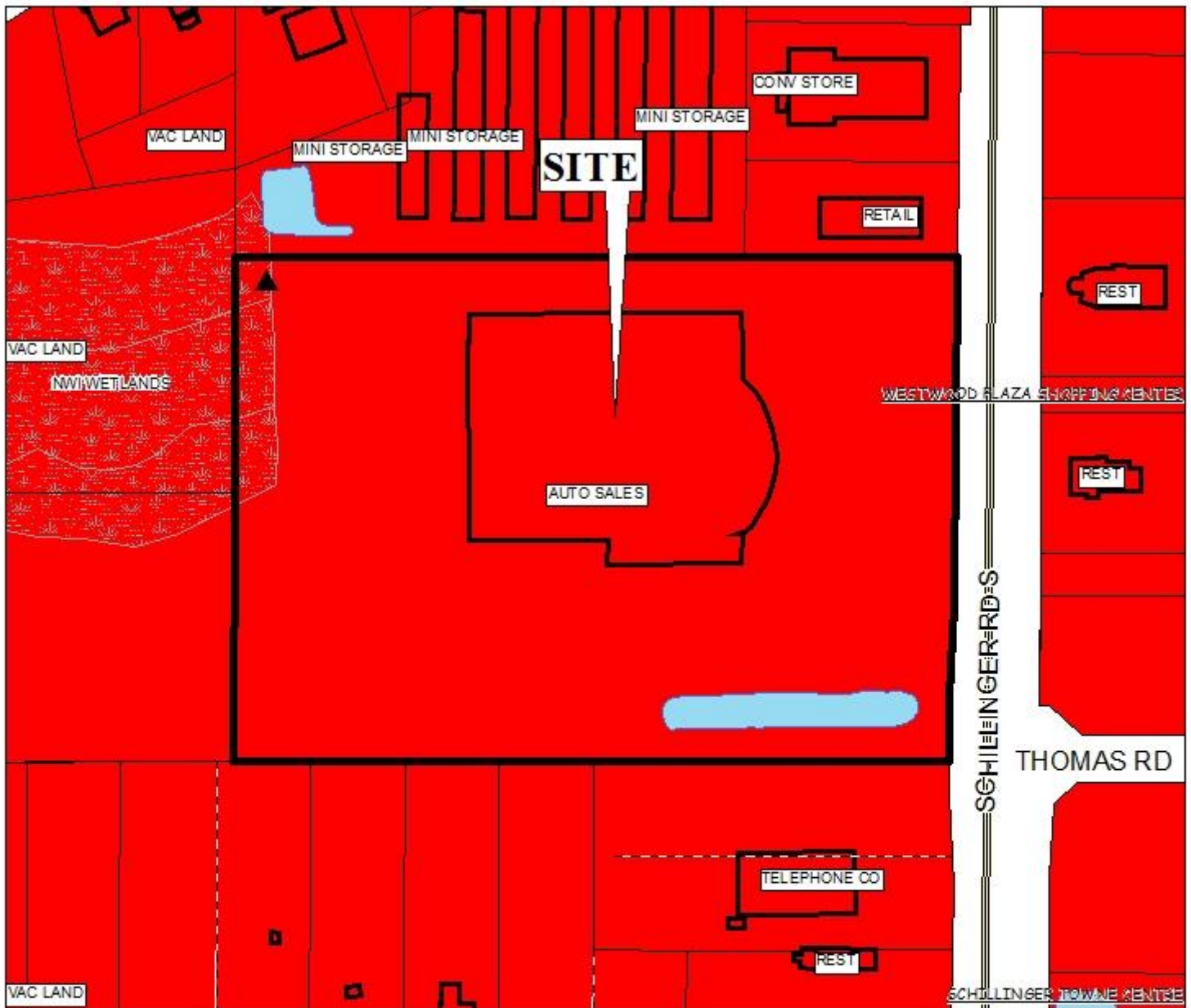
APPLICATION NUMBER 5957 DATE April 6, 2015

APPLICANT Wrico Signs, Inc.

REQUEST Sign Variance



# BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT VICINITY MAP - EXISTING ZONING



The site is surrounded by commercial units.

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<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: cyan; border: 1px solid black;"></span> R-A	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black;"></span> R-3	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: tan; border: 1px solid black;"></span> T-B	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black;"></span> B-2	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: blue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> B-5	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> MUN	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightorange; border: 1px solid black;"></span> SD-WH	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> T5.1
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: white; border: 1px solid black;"></span> R-1	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black;"></span> R-B	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> B-1	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black;"></span> B-3	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightpurple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> I-1	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightgreen; border: 1px solid black;"></span> OPEN	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightpink; border: 1px solid black;"></span> T3	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: darkpurple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> T5.2
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span> R-2	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: peachpuff; border: 1px solid black;"></span> H-B	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> LB-2	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: brown; border: 1px solid black;"></span> B-4	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: grey; border: 1px solid black;"></span> I-2	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightorange; border: 1px solid black;"></span> SD	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: lightpurple; border: 1px solid black;"></span> T4	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: darkblue; border: 1px solid black;"></span> T6





# BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

## VICINITY MAP - EXISTING ZONING



The site is surrounded by commercial units.

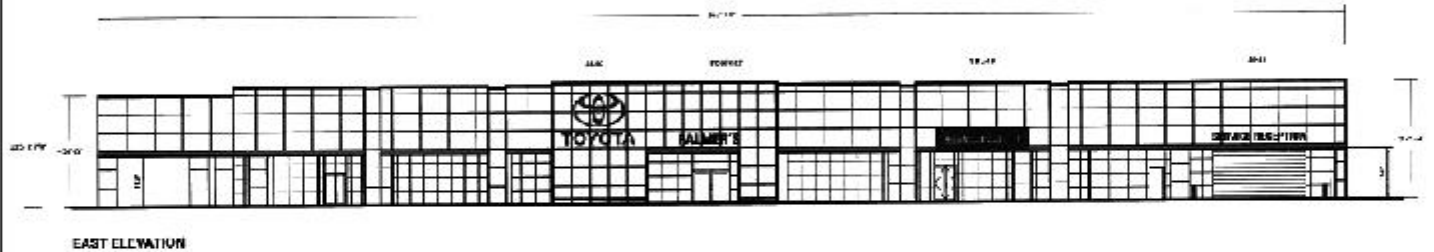
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# DETAIL SITE PLAN



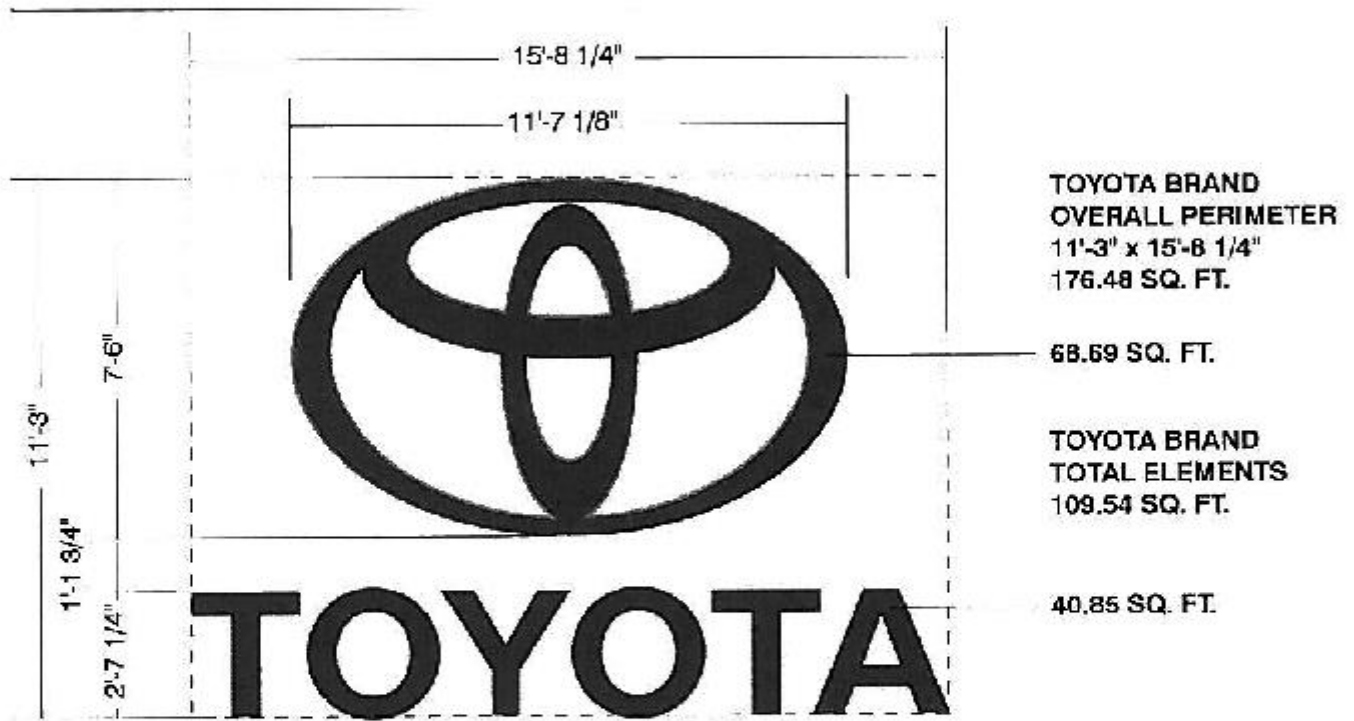
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## DETAIL SITE PLAN



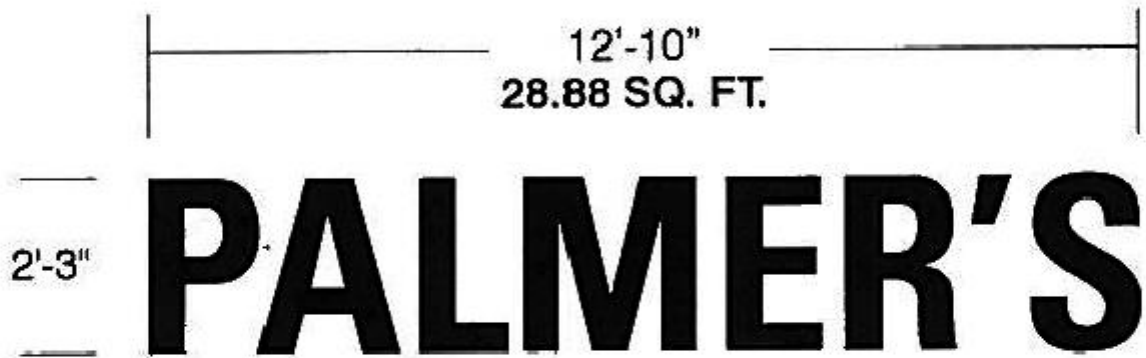
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## DETAIL SITE PLAN



**PDNN-27**

**NON-ILLUMINATED MOLDED LETTERS**

- MOLDED BLACK ACRYLIC LETTERS - 1 1/2" PROFILE
- STOOLED OFF GLASS PORTAL 1/4"

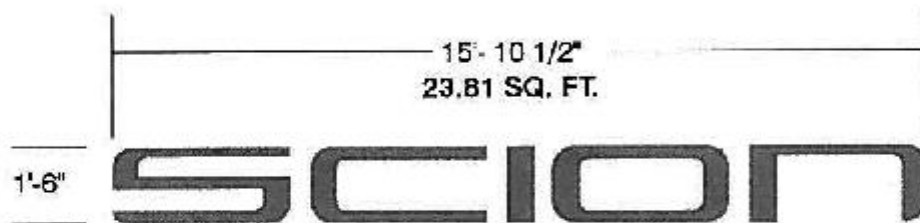
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## DETAIL SITE PLAN



### SBL-18

#### ILLUMINATED CHANNEL LETTERS

- FABRICATED AS PER APPROVED SPECIFICATIONS
- 3/16" #2447 WHITE ACRYLIC FACES (FLAT)
- PERFORATED VINYL TYPE B SCREEN PRINTED GF-838 APPLIED ON FIRST SURFACE
- 0.040 ALUMINUM LETTERS AND F-TRIM PAINTED GREY TO MATCH GF-838
- ILLUMINATED WITH WHITE LED
- BLACK PANEL SUPPLIED BY OTHERS

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## DETAIL SITE PLAN



### SI-21

#### ILLUMINATED CHANNEL LETTERS

- ALUMINUM CABINETS BLACK
- F-TRIM RETAINERS BLACK
- 3/16" WHITE PIGMENTED ACRYLIC FACES #2447  
WITH 3M BLACK PERFORATED VINYL 3635-222  
APPLIED FIRST SURFACE
- ILLUMINATED WITH WHITE LED
- ELECTRICAL HOOK-UP SUPPLIED BY OTHERS

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